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NRC FINES BARNETT INDUSTRIAL X-RAY \$4,000  
FOR SAFETY LAPSE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$4,000 fine against Barnett Industrial X-Ray (BIX), of Stillwater, Okla., for violating safety rules for the use of industrial radiographic equipment.

The incident that led to the proposed fine occurred October 3, 1996, in Ponca City, Okla., where a BIX radiographer and an assistant were assigned to inspect welding work. Industrial radiographic equipment utilizes radioactive sources to examine metal objects for cracks and flaws. As the assistant radiographer was disassembling the equipment after the job he discovered that the radioactive source had not been fully retracted into its shielded container. This could have resulted in a serious radiation exposure for the two workers, although a prompt investigation by the company indicated that there was no exposure above NRC limits.

To protect themselves from unnecessary radiation exposure while working with radiographic equipment workers are required to wear personal radiation monitors called alarm ratemeters and to check for radiation around the equipment with a survey meter following a job. Neither the radiographer nor his assistant wore alarm ratemeters and no survey was conducted when they concluded their work as required. Meeting either of these safety requirements could have prevented the incident. The NRC also cited the radiographer for failure to properly supervise his assistant.

The violations were classified by the NRC as a Severity Level II problem on the NRC's four-level scale, with Severity Level I being the most serious. A violation of this type normally carries an \$8,000 fine; however BIX took a number of prompt actions in dealing with the incident, which led the NRC to reduce the fine by half.

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BIX conducted an investigation of the incident immediately after it occurred, took disciplinary action against the workers involved and notified the NRC promptly. The company also held a safety meeting with all its employees, increased its audits of radiography personnel and developed a formal disciplinary program to handle future violations.

NRC Acting Regional Administrator Jim Dyer said in a letter to BIX that the penalty was imposed to emphasize to this company and others that they bear the responsibility to assure that employees meet basic radiation safety requirements.

BIX must respond to the Notice of Violation in writing within 30 days. The response must document specific actions taken to prevent recurrence of the violations. During this time the company may pay the fine or file a protest.